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British Demobilization Plans

By ROBERT C. CLOTHIER

AT the end of the Boer War, England suffered from civic unrest as a result of the unplanned unloading of soldier personnel on industry. The lesson was not forgotten. Sixteen years afterward, before the greatest war of England's history had approached an end, definite plans for the dismissal of its soldier personnel were evolved in order to prevent the recurrence of such unrest. It was evident that, owing to the numbers of men involved, the unrest in 1919 would be far more acute than it was in 1902 unless some counter-influence were exerted.

The probability of such unrest must necessarily be greater in the case of England than in the case of the United States, owing to the fact that, actually and proportionately, England has sent more men to war than America has. Approximately, the British Isles have sent one man to every ten of their population. The United States has sent one man to every twenty-five.

England is industrially very much alive. Her manufactories are operating with diluted and substitute labor—much of which wants to "stay put." It is true that the reëstablishment of British industry on a peace basis will open up positions which have been closed during the war. Yet it will also close hundreds of thousands of war jobs, the holders of which will demand employment elsewhere. Now, the army personnel is to be released—superimposed upon the "dilutees" who want to stay put and the war-workers who must have employment in peace-time production. In short, England as a nation has stretched its labor personnel to the utmost to create her armies and to man (and woman) her essential industries. Can it "contract" its labor personnel to normal as easily?

These considerations, viewed in the light of her experience of 1902, determined that in demobilization the interests of the army should be subordinated to the interests of industry. In the plans for demobilizing the armies, worked out by the Director of Mobilization, the basic factor (after the factor of military safety) was not the convenience of the army but the needs of industry for

certain kinds of men. Thus, as a corollary, it became a fact that demobilization should take place according to the industrial classifications of the men and the requirements of industry for men of those classifications *in the order in which they are wanted.*

This conclusion was reached in part by a process of elimination. Demobilization by units was set aside in the beginning. It was seen that such a plan would flood British industry with man power without reference to its fitness, much of which would be worthless in the initial stages of civic reconstruction and which, for that reason, would provide an added problem of unemployment to those already confronting the government. It was also recognized as unfair to the millions of men overseas if those at home, just because they were on the spot, were given the first opportunity to secure work. In short, the priority of demobilization is not determined by geographical location, or by age, or by length of time in the service, or by the fact that some have family obligations and others have not, although all these factors are given consideration in the selection of men for early release. The primary factor in the priority of demobilization is the individual's special occupational fitness. The men needed first for industrial and civic reconstruction will be released first. The others will be released in such manner and sequence as will make it possible for industry to absorb them most readily.

THE BRITISH ARMY SYSTEM

This establishes the need for a priority list of industrial groups prepared according to the relative requirements of the different industries, this list to be used by the army as a guide in selecting the men for early release. Because England planned her methods ahead, the machinery for determining these priorities was ready and set up when the time for action came. There was no need for a hurried and ineffective attempt at the last minute to find out what men were wanted first.

It may be of interest, especially to readers familiar with army procedure, to touch on the system used by the British army to determine its officers' and soldiers' industrial qualifications as a basis for selecting them for release according to the priority list. Each soldier carries on his person an army book, a small waterproof booklet containing his pay record and other important

information. In this is entered his trade and industrial group as ascertained previously, either when he entered the army or subsequently on his return to England. There are forty-one industrial groups provided for in the British plan, as follows:

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|--------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Agriculture | 16. Leather tanning | 28. China |
| 2. Seamen | 17. Other leather trades | 29. Brick |
| 3. Coal mining | 18. Clothing | 30. Building |
| 4. Other mining | 19. Sawmilling | 31. Railway |
| 5. Slate mines | 20. Furniture | 32. Dock laborers |
| 6. Quarries | 21. Coachbuilding | 33. Carters |
| 7. Food | 22. Shipbuilding | 34. Motor drivers |
| 8. Explosives | 23. Iron and steel manu- | 35. Public employees |
| 9. India rubber | facturers | 36. General laborers |
| 10. Printing | 24. Tin plate manufactur- | 37. Commercial |
| 11. Woolen | ers | 38. Warehouse men |
| 12. Cotton | 25. Iron foundry | 39. Domestic |
| 13. Other textile trades | 26. Engineering | 40. Other occupations |
| 14. Dyeing | 27. Other metal trades | 41. Employers |
| 15. Bootmakers | | |

These industrial groups are not arranged here according to priority. The priority is subject to change from time to time as the need for men by industry changes.

Under the British plan, an order is to be issued by the War Office at the proper time (probably before this article appears) that all unit commanders shall classify their personnel on special forms, according to (first) the man's industrial classification and (second) his "dispersal area." In explanation of the latter term, the British Isles are divided into districts known as dispersal areas, each of which has its dispersal station, corresponding to the cantonments America is using as demobilization camps.

Each of these army forms is forwarded to the next superior officer where it is consolidated with similar reports and forwarded on and up through military channels until a consolidated report is in the possession of the War Office which shows the number of men of each industrial group from each dispersal area in each command, at home and overseas. Three weeks is the period of time estimated as elapsing between the issuing of the order and the receipt of the tabulated information by the War Office. With this information in hand, both as to the classification of the men in the army and the sequence of industrial groups, an allotment of numbers is issued to the overseas forces and to the com-

mands at home, to the end that proportionate numbers of men from overseas and from within the United Kingdom of the proper industrial groups shall be returned to civil life at such times and in such order as they are needed.

The time consumed in obtaining from the field the reports of the composition of the forces in terms of industrial groups is used to good effect in the setting up of the military machinery for demobilization. In the demobilization regulations this is made clear as:

The creation of cadre establishments for units of all armies for the care of matériel—guns, equipment, etc.; the formation of army units, composed of men who are specially trained in their duties, which are to draw the men from the army, receive them at designated points, transport them to England, disperse them there; the creation of a system of payment for dispersed soldiers; the making of arrangements for the collection and storage of arms and equipment; the preparation of the necessary army forms for the classification, selection and releasing of men; estimating and coördinating the transportation of facilities available; making arrangements for concentrating, embarkation and disembarkation; preparation for the accommodations for officers and men and horses, including these temporarily incapacitated.

The "army units" referred to in the second line of the above are "dispersal units," each of which comprises sufficient trained personnel to clear 2,000 men in twenty-four hours. Usually one dispersal unit is thought of as located at a dispersal station, but when more than 2,000 men are expected to pass through a given dispersal station in twenty-four hours, more than one dispersal unit is assigned to it. For assignment to eighteen dispersal stations there are thirty dispersal units.

At the same time, the War Office is engaged in selecting and releasing certain special individuals needed by the army to carry on the work of demobilization and resettlement. These are defined, first, as "demobilizers," men to be called out of the army to serve in a civil capacity, such as trained pay and record clerks, overseas traders, civil police, doctors, etc.; and second, as, "pivotal men," the key men in the various industries without whom the bulk of the men to be employed cannot get to work effectively.

It is the intention of the War Office, while demobilizing the armies by occupational groups and while releasing equal numbers of men from units at home and from units overseas, to permit the commanding officers sufficient latitude in selection to give preference to men who have been longest in the field and to those who are married.

Critics who see this procedure from a strictly military viewpoint may comment unfavorably upon the fact that it honeycombs the military units and therefore destroys their effectiveness. It must be borne in mind, however, that all this machinery for demobilization by industrial groups is made conditional upon military safety. In all these plans for dispersing the armies, prior consideration is given, above all things, to the possibility of ill-faith on the part of the enemy and the necessity, for that or other reasons, of being able to exert military power on short notice. Consequently such criticism, if expressed, is hardly justified. It is true that to permit demobilization by individuals the British plan provides for the reduction of units to cadres—about one-third of war strength in some cases and less in others—but sufficient for the care, transportation and eventual dispersal of animals, guns, equipment and other material.

After the reports of the men (by industrial group and by dispersal area) are dispatched to the War Office, after the priority of industrial groups is determined, and after the allotment numbers are issued to the various commands and are prorated to the constituent units, each unit commander selects the men to be forwarded according to their industrial groups and, in less degree, to their length of service, their domestic responsibilities and other personal considerations. Thus thought is given in each man's case to his relative right to early release, but the program as a whole lays special stress upon the need of industrial Britain for workmen of the right kinds.

As each man leaves his unit to go home he is given a dispersal certificate, which gives all information needed en route and at the dispersal station. This dispersal certificate, issued to him by his unit commander, gives his name, his destination, the equipment for which he is responsible, his dispersal area, his military unit, his industrial group, his trade within that group, his medical category and other pertinent information. These men selected for dispersal, each with his dispersal certificate, are sorted abroad into collecting camps, which are affiliated with the various sea and rail routes serving the several dispersal areas in the United Kingdom. These dispersal areas are laid out, not mechanically, but according to the territory served by the different railroads.

Soldiers in units at home are collected at designated stations and are handled in like manner.

At the collecting camps overseas the men are grouped into drafts of several hundred each. These drafts are forwarded to the British Isles as quickly as transportation is available and there proceed directly to their respective dispersal stations. Thus each man comes to the dispersal station nearest his home, fully equipped; the British plan provides for the use of each soldier as a "carrier" in transporting his personal arms and equipment to England. At the dispersal station he is kept only a few hours; he hands in his arms and equipment, assuming charge for any lost articles. Here he receives an unemployment donation policy, a railway warrant to his home, a certificate entitling him to a suit of plain clothes at 50 shillings wholesale, a cash payment of two pounds to be charged against his account, a service gratuity of one pound for each year of service, a war gratuity (undetermined in amount) which is supposed to compensate him for the loss of the ancient and honorable privilege of looting, and a protection certificate. This certificate he must be prepared to present in order to obtain from the Post Office the money orders which are to be sent to him periodically thereafter for his pay, and his separation and family and ration allowances, all of which are to be continued to him during the twenty-eight days furlough which is allowed him after his dispersal.

Each man is permitted to retain as his private property his uniform, boots and underclothes. He is permitted to retain his greatcoat during his furlough but must return it at the conclusion of the twenty-eight days. He may wear his uniform during this period but at the end of it he will be expected to have reclothed himself in plain clothes. Allowance for purchasing plain clothes, as stated above, is in the form of a certificate which entitles him to a suit of clothes retailing at 57 shillings 6 d., and wholesaling at 50 shillings. If the soldier cares to do so he may exchange this certificate for fifty shillings cash. It is interesting in this regard to know that owing to the concentration of industry on war needs there is not an adequate supply of tweeds, worsteds and other appropriate goods to make all the plain clothes needed. To help solve this problem it is planned to subject to special treatment,

the great amount of khaki cloth on hand, thus making it appropriate for use in the making of civilian clothes.

The unemployment insurance policy issued to ex-soldiers is the same in nature as the regular national unemployment insurance policy. This insurance is free; there are no dues and there are no "waiting weeks," as is customary in industrial insurance. The benefit is not called a benefit but a "donation," for the purpose, psychologically, of leading the man to secure employment at the earliest opportunity.

The procedure explained in these paragraphs applies *in principle* to officers as well. The furlough and the unemployment insurance are not granted to officers.

The demobilization of the Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Corps (women) will be carried out on similar lines. The women are formed into dispersal drafts and cleared through dispersal hostels; in their selection for release special attention is given to their dispensability and to their domestic obligations.

UNDERLYING CONDITIONS

In preceding paragraphs we have considered the actual machinery of demobilization and dispersal. This paper should touch similarly on the underlying conditions upon which this procedure is based. One of the foremost factors to be considered in this regard is sea transportation. The chartering of ships and the providing of adequate wharfing facilities are, in the case of the British, taken care of by the Ministry of Shipping which functions at Paris under the Allied Council. Obviously, the more ships that can be spared from other national requirements the quicker will be the process of repatriation. It is interesting to note, however, that General Burnett-Hitchcock, Director of Mobilization, stated to the writer of this paper that the neck of the bottle in the demobilization of the armies overseas will prove to be the wharfage facilities in France. The General believes that this will be true in the case of America's armies as well.

With reference to land transportation, it is planned to release from the army among the first the technical railroad men needed to operate the roads during this period of increased passenger and freight traffic. Ample rolling stock is on hand. The coördination of the sea and land transportation facilities of the United

Kingdom will be carried out under the Director of Movements and Railways, who functions under the Director of Mobilization.

The all-important question of the supply of raw materials is being studied under the Ministry of Reconstruction. Steps are being taken as far as possible to secure sufficient supplies of raw materials well in advance. Similarly plans are in effect whereby adequate financial assistance will be given manufacturers and others whose businesses have been disrupted by the war in order that they may be enabled to reorganize as quickly as possible for peace-time production.

The care of the ex-soldiers and ex-officers who are still unfit for civil life owing to their injuries is assumed by the Ministry of Pensions. These disabled men must be accommodated and arrangements must be made for this accommodation without impeding the dispersal of returning troops. It is stated that the present hospital facilities will be adequate for the handling of this class of personnel. There are 400,000 hospital beds in England available for the purpose.

Thus, in summing up, we see that the British War Office intends that the men of Britain shall be returned to industry in the order in which they are wanted. The machinery of demobilization is organized with this in mind. Through the functioning of this machinery men are brought back to the localities where they will be useful, but no attempt is made arbitrarily to assign them to specific jobs. It is not to be supposed, however, that because there is no military agency to accomplish this result that provision is not made for the resettlement of individuals in productive industrial life. Officers and soldiers are given every assistance in securing work for which they are qualified. Those who have openings to which they can return of course will require no assistance; but those who have no such positions awaiting them must either establish industrial contacts themselves or secure help in doing so. In order that they may receive proper assistance, those who wish it are privileged to fill out army forms, prepared for the purpose, at the time when the unit commanders are classifying their personnel prior to the withdrawal of men. There is one form for officers and soldiers of like standing in civil life; there is a separate form for soldiers of artisan standing in civil life. These forms are sent to the Ministry of Labor, under which are

two organizations; the Ex-officers' Resettlement Committee, which is equivalent to an employment exchange for professional and business men, and the Labor Resettlement Committee, which assumes the same responsibilities with reference to tradesmen. The latter functions primarily through the employment exchanges of the Ministry of Labor, corresponding in general to the offices of the United States Employment Service.

SALIENT POINTS FOR AMERICAN DEMOBILIZATION

There is much in the British system that does not apply to our own conditions. It is believed by many, however, that demobilization according to some industrial standard is necessary for America too if unemployment and labor unrest are not to ensue. It is not the purpose of this paper to offer an opinion on this point. The responsibility of replacing discharged soldiers (and ex-munitions workers) in industry is, however, a function that is very clearly located. There is need for some agency to help men get jobs they are qualified to fill when they want help of that kind. No service of this kind should be made mandatory. The individual will resent any such service imposed on him. He will, however, be grateful for the same service if proffered to him on a voluntary basis.

It is apparent that at this time there is an exceptional opportunity offered to the United States Employment Service—and a corresponding responsibility imposed upon it. Whether demobilization of the armies at home and overseas be by military unit or on some industrial basis as in the case of the British, the need for a national employment clearing house is evident. The need will be especially acute if demobilization is by military units, inasmuch as, in that case, a larger proportion of men will be released from the army for whom there are no welcoming jobs waiting at home. These men will, unavoidably, have greater difficulty in finding their places. Naturally they will require assistance to a greater measure than men released because they are *needed* now by industry.

When America entered the war, the Secretary of War created the Committee on Classification of Personnel, a group of business specialists who had engaged in practical personnel work in industry. Under the direction of this group, a functioning system was

created in the army whereby the millions of men flowing from industry into the army were classified with a high degree of accuracy, trade-tested in the cases of certain skilled trades, and placed in positions where their skill could be used by the army, not thrown away as unfortunately was the case in Britain's hurried mobilization in 1914. This has resulted in the increased effectiveness of the army through increasing the effectiveness of the individual officer and soldier.

The process of demobilization offers a parallel opportunity for constructive work of this kind. The gears of the machine are thrown in reverse and the vast supply of personnel will henceforth flow from the army back into industry. Under this changed state of affairs, the importance of the principles of *the proper placement of the individual* remains a constant. It is equally true that the abilities of men must be determined and used if those men are to find happiness and be of maximum service to industry.

In short, we have been engaged in analyzing men and placing them properly in the interest of military effectiveness. Now we should perfect the machinery through which these men should be given the opportunity to have their abilities determined and to be put in contact with jobs for which they are fitted—in the interest of industrial effectiveness.

In large measure, the methods used by the army in placing men in work for which they are fitted can be adopted by industry. Recruits entering the army do not fill out their own forms as is so frequently the practice in the employing offices of industrial concerns. They are cross-questioned by trained interviewers who enter the data for the soldiers on their records. Scientific trade tests have been worked out in coöperation with industrial concerns and the tests themselves tested to establish their accuracy. Recruits claiming skill in the metal and woodworking trades are given trade tests and their proficiency definitely established. Officers of technical units calling for skilled men are thus assured, especially in the case of those trade-tested, that the men furnished them can do the work for which they are requested.

Army trade specifications have been prepared and published in pamphlet form for the use of army officers in requisitioning skilled men. For each of over 600 trades needed by the army, there has been carefully studied out (a) duties of the tradesman, (b) qual-

ifications entitling a man to undertake such work and (c) substitute occupations to be called on if men of the original trade are not available. For example:

FORGING MACHINE OPERATOR

Duties

1. Operation of standard types and various kinds and sizes of forging machines, such as bulldozes and hydraulic presses on general work.

Qualifications

2. Should have thorough knowledge of rivet and bolt forging machines, screw, toggle and hydraulic presses for heading staybolts, forms and all classes of press forgings of various materials.

Should have a practical knowledge of coal, gas and oil types of forge furnace, and the proper heating of various material for forgings.

Must be able to set and adjust dies and maintain same and be able to turn out uniformly dimensioned product.

Substitute Occupations

3. Drop forge operator, press operator, heavy forge blacksmith, blacksmith.

The use of these specifications establishes a uniform language. There is no possibility of the depot camp personnel officer furnishing the wrong kind of men through misinterpretation of terms. A drill-press operator is a certain definite kind of man; a bench hand is another. The use of these specifications prevents the forwarding of bench hands when drill-press operators are wanted, merely because they are both mechanics.

All this work in the camps has been done by officers and men of ability and training who in business life command proportionate salaries. Without this superior personnel, these superior results would have been impossible. An effective machine in the hands of low-paid men of mediocre ability functions with the effectiveness, not of the machine, but of the men.

It is believed that these methods are equally adaptable to the proper distribution and placement of men in industry. It is believed that the tradesman returning to industry has the right to have his ability determined and recognized and to have assistance in securing the position to which his skill entitles him. It is believed that similarly the employer is entitled to have some certification of the ability of the men referred to him, for any mismatching between the man and the job results in loss to the employer as well as to the man. And certainly by the establishment of uniform trade terminology, it should be made possible

for the employer to be confident of receiving the kind of man wanted and for the man to be saved the possibility of setting forth on a job for which he is not qualified.

In so far as steps to this end have already been taken by the Labor Department in all cities say over 25,000, the United States Employment Service is in a position to assume this gigantic task of placing our army personnel back into industry—and not only that but also the task of acting permanently as a means of contact between the American employer and the American workman. If at any of its offices machinery of this type is not in full use and operation, an opportunity undoubtedly exists for the United States Employment Service to increase its effectiveness and value to the country.

There is much in the British plans for demobilization that is of significance to us. Their method of release of men from the army is perhaps not parallel to ours. Yet American business can learn a lesson from the British plans for resettlement and from the American system of fitting men into the army which, if heeded, should result in the establishment of a machine which would prove a permanent asset to American industry.